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How to Help the Immigrant

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MOST of us can remember a little group of devoted "missionary women" who came together once a week to pray for an open door to the foreigner. Their prayer has been answered. God has opened the door. *But it swings both ways.* We may now go to the foreigner with the gospel, but he is also coming to us, bringing his problems with him.

Hungry, oppressed, exploited, deceived—born in lands where the word "government" means oppression—these millions look upon "AMERIKA" as the twentieth century land of promise. Like a great wave they are coming, threatening to flood our Eastern States, swelling the tide toward the west, and splashing the spray everywhere.

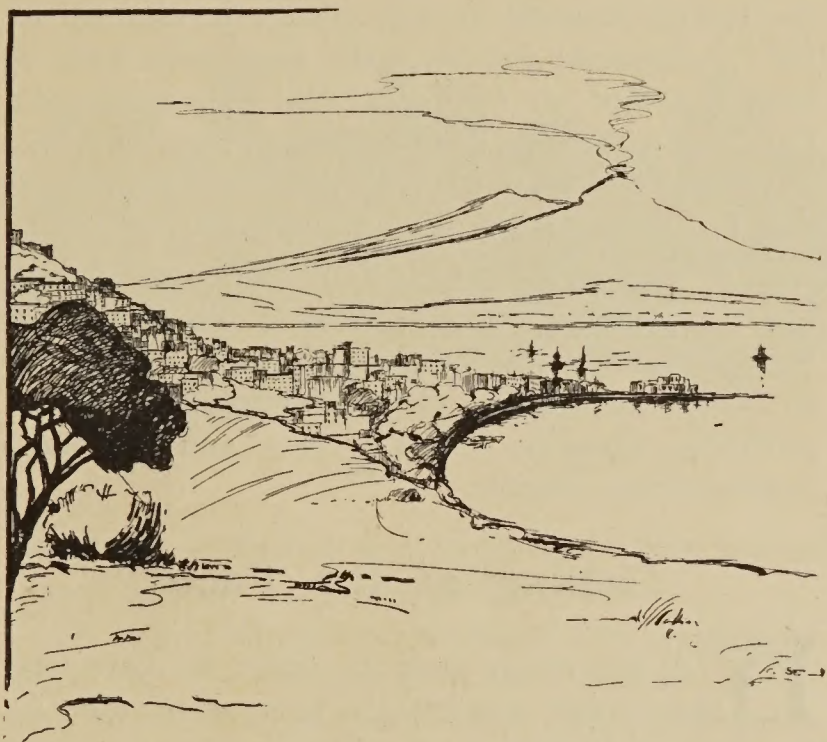
Even though immigration should at this time be absolutely restricted, the present generation of Americans will have all it can do to adequately meet the needs of those who are already here. But they will continue to come. Every law which affects human life—physical, social, political, economic—seems to have conspired to make America the Mecca of the oppressed races of the earth. True

enough, after they get here, the call of the homeland is often heard and many return. Family relationships, the spare cash deposited in foreign savings banks, the pleading for loyalty on the part of the government, the constant inducements offered by steamship companies, and the natural love for the fatherland which exists in the heart of every patriot—all these have a tendency to pull them back, especially during a time of business depression in the United States.

But when the immigrant returns to the fatherland it is as a missionary—telling of the greatness and the glory of America! Stirred is the blood of the men as they listen, and quick comes the flush of the women who have slaved for a living.

And so it happens that when the returned immigrant finds that the conditions which first drove him out have remained unchanged, back he comes, the leader of a band which also seeks its fortune in this wonderland, where a man may earn four times as much as he earned at home, where women are honored as they are in no other part of the world, and where even the rights of little children are respected. Here, too, they find religious and political freedom, a man's chance to make the most of himself, and economic liberty such as they never knew before.





Some of the Problems

SETTling principally in our cities, and influenced by segregative tendencies, they form their "Ghettos," their "Little Italys," their "Bohemian Hills," often retaining their old country social ideas and customs.

Coming from lands where their privileges have been restricted; they become an easy prey to social agitators. Sometimes the false economic doctrines accepted abroad influence their relationships in America. The temperance movement in this country finds its strongest opponents in the voters among

the foreign element in our cities. Accustomed to the "Continental Sunday," the immigrant finds it hard to accept our method of observing the Lord's Day, and with vigor does he seek to break it down. Purchased and led to the polls by corrupt politicians, they become a menace to the well-being of our country. Dependent upon their daily work for a living, their movements are largely determined by economic conditions, hence they often go from place to place, frequently victims of unscrupulous employment agencies, "fake" banks and dishonest transportation officials.

Getting at the Facts

NOW are we to meet the needs of these who have come, unwittingly, because—if there is any potency in prayer—the Church has long asked for the chance to help them?

First, by sympathetically studying their social and moral conditions. Not by organizing "slumming parties," nor by going into the work merely for the sake of studying "sociology," nor yet because the subject has become a fad, but because there is an honest purpose to help those who need education and direction, but principally the influence of the gospel, with all that this implies.

Study the manner in which they live in the tenements and ask yourself if you could remain sweet-tempered—to say nothing about being Christian—under such conditions. Look into their restricted



social and intellectual opportunities, and you will no longer wonder why some are immoral.

Go to the police court and glance over the records. Find out why the immigrant was arrested. Probably it will be discovered that in many cases it was on account of his ignorance of our language and customs.

Investigate the reading matter which goes to his home. Note how plentiful is the supply of materialistic Socialist and Anarchist literature with which somebody has made it his business to supply him. The postmaster can tell you about this. So can the letter carrier and the news agent.

Note how the saloon has become his social centre. Here he has his birthday parties, his christenings, his marriages. The saloon is his employment agency, his social club, his reading-room, his savings bank, his steamship agency, his political headquarters. Indeed, nothing is too "common" for this cen-

tre of influence. He trusts the owner of the saloon—this countryman of his—who seems so interested in all that concerns him.

His social instinct is strongly developed. He loves the crowd. Therefore lodges, labor unions, social and benevolent orders appeal to him. It would pay to find out what there is in these that is so attractive, and what may be improved upon—eliminating the obnoxious features—and then to supply a substitute for whatever may be detrimental to his highest interests.

Sources of Information

ACTS concerning the immigrant may be obtained from the public school principals and teachers. It would be well to visit the schools and inquire about the work of the immigrant's children.

The political leaders know the voters among the foreigners, and many who do not vote—legitimately. Among every group of foreigners there will usually be found an ambitious young fellow who is honestly trying to lead his countrymen into better ways. This man's co-operation should be secured in any plans which are to be introduced among his people.

The employers of labor may give assistance. They know the foreigners' economic value, and what will give them greater worth. Often the saloon-keeper could give information which would be a revelation to the Church workers. He has no pet theories concerning the foreigner, and he knows

much about his real needs. The census returns are valuable in giving facts and figures which are informing. The Department of Immigration in Washington will supply you with abundant material, which is always up to date.



The Department of Immigration of the Home Board is at the service of every Christian worker in the Presbyterian Church. Our office is a clearing house for every sort of information concerning the immigrant. New York City, the greatest immigrant centre in the world, is our laboratory. The Presbytery of New York has given over to our department its work among immigrants on Manhattan Island and The Bronx. Here we have a dozen churches of various nationalities, in which we are working out for the entire country the problems which apply to every immigrant centre in America.



Make the Church the Centre

YOU may help the immigrant by engaging in practical methods of work in his behalf. The orthodox method of supplying him with opportunities for religious worship is to establish a mission on a side street, in a dark, dingy, dirty building. Then we wonder why these men who formerly worshipped in the great cathedrals of Europe do not crowd our mission halls. Sometimes they do in their eagerness to hear the story of the gospel, but they do it in spite of many handicaps. We cannot give them cathedrals which rival those in the fatherland, but we can at least give them decently clean meeting places.

Making the church the centre, an educational campaign may be inaugurated whose influence will reach every home in the community. Classes in English will better equip the immigrant to make his way in the world. The knowledge of domestic science will help the women to make their homes brighter, healthier and more Christ-like. Here the immigrant should be taught lessons of American patriotism. Not despising the love for the country which gave him birth, nevertheless he should be made to see that his immediate interests are now with America, and that his destiny is wrapped up with that of his adopted country.

Here, also, the immigrant should be made to feel is a place to which he may bring his family to satisfy the natural desire for relaxation and profitable recreation.

The immigrant has not forgotten how to play. Folk dances and carnivals appeal to him. Under Christian influence may not his amusements help to relieve the monotony of a desolate life?

Ministering to the Women

THE "Kaffee Klatsch" for the women gives them cheer, and usually better coffee than they enjoy at home. And how the clean, white tablecloth and fresh-cut flowers bring smiles of appreciation. If they may take the flowers home, how glad they are. It doesn't mean much to those who gave them, but what joy it brings to homes too dark and sunless to raise the flowers they love so much. It may be that it will take a while to break up the stiffness of the occasion, but with a little tact these grave women with faces heavy with care can be made to romp like little children as they play the games that drive away the clouds of trouble which seem always to hover over them. This is truly a Christian ministry, even though never a prayer nor a scripture is spoken. Not that these would be out



of order, but even without them the work—or play—would be the work of Christ. For, be it confessed, what most of these immigrant women need is not admonition, but just the plain, hearty comradeship of those who have enjoyed more of the better things of life—those things which have given the larger vision.

The women need help more than do the men. Confined to the four walls of their kitchens, and made to listen to the crying and the shouting of the children, isn't it a wonder that more of them do not become insane? Many of them do, but you probably never hear about it. Here's a chance for some big-hearted woman—the chance to minister to just *one* immigrant woman, pouring into her life something of the abundance which has filled her own. Visiting her in her home, counseling with her concerning her children, helping to find work for her husband—in short, being a friend—not in the spirit of patronage or paternalism, but coming as a sister in the spirit of her Master.

The Children Need Help

THE children of immigrants of the first generation are a greater problem and menace than the immigrant himself. Unrestrained and uninstructed on account of the ignorance of parents, and seeing unlawful pleasures abundant, they often find their way to the saloon, the cheap theatre and even viler places, frequently ending with the penitentiary.

Industrial classes and clubs for the boys and girls will give them better motives and higher incentives. The kindergarten is one of the greatest factors in helping the children. Trained to use head and hand and heart aright during the years between three and six, these lessons will go with them all

through life. Incidentally, this ministry to the children will win the hearts of the parents, whose own lives are brightened by the cheer of the kindergarten trophies which are brought home by the child and displayed with pride by the older folks. But it's the personal influence of the teacher or the leader—unconsciously exerted—which counts for most in children's work. Important then to secure men and women of character, who may be entrusted with the destinies of those who have been committed to their charge.

Few are the institutional church features which may not be employed in reaching and helping the



immigrant. Studying their needs will determine the peculiar form which this ministry should take.

Speaking in Universal Languages

THE difficulty of language need not stand as a barrier in many methods which may be adopted. There are ways of working through which one may speak to the people of every tongue.

First of all, there is the universal language of love. Some time ago two cultured young people in New York were married, one an American and the other a Russian, but neither being able to speak the other's language. However, they found a way to express their love. A handgrasp, a smile, a glance of the eye, will do it. One may talk to anybody in this way—even a little six months' old baby, who cannot speak at all, will understand it. Haven't you noticed how that group of Italian laborers alongside the railroad track responds to a smile or a wave of the hand as the train passes by?

Then, too, one may speak through printed matter. The Socialists are doing it. They consider it their best propaganda method. In some American cities they have special committees appointed to distribute their literature, printed in various languages, among the tenement people, who read it with avidity. Printing in their own language the message which you desire to bring them, you may speak to larger numbers than would be possible even though



you could speak their language, and often the printed page would do it better than you can, because you may thus use the greatest truths which have yet been spoken.

You may use the stereopticon and moving picture machine. Pictures talk in every tongue. Earliest of methods was this—the teaching of truth through graphics. Presenting pictures of patriots of the fatherland, with whom they are familiar, and combining these with illustrations of American heroes will inspire to better citizenship. The story of the parables may be told, the progress of Pilgrim, the life of Christ and the Apostle Paul and other scriptural knowledge may be received entirely through the eye-gate. Old country pictures for use in the stereopticon and moving picture machine have be-

come so common that one may easily work out an entire season's program of "picture talks."

You may speak in the language of music—the language which the foreigner seems to understand even more readily than the native American. In every city they have their musical organizations—Germans, Bohemians, Italians—indeed, nearly every nationality is represented in the musical societies which meet back of the saloons in the tenement-house districts, and in the halls which are rented at small cost above the saloons. Would it not be a Christian thing to offer them the use of the church for these rehearsals? For where could they go besides the saloon? The saloonkeeper has a monopoly of practically all the halls in their neighborhood. The immigrants will be attracted by song services, even though they cannot understand the words which are used. The great organs in our churches would thrill them—if they could but hear them, arousing the noblest feelings in the human breast.

Aggressive Evangelism

BUT, after all, we must give them the gospel in their own language. Much as may be done through other methods, the best work cannot be accomplished unless we speak to the immigrant concerning his most intimate and personal relationship to God. This may be done, among other ways, through open-air

preaching and tent work in the summer season. Special meetings for children may be conducted after school hours in the afternoon, or before the evening service, thus relieving the meeting for adults of the restlessness which the presence of children often brings, unless they are accompanied by their parents. "Cottage" prayer meetings may be held in their homes in the winter time, to which they should be urged to invite their friends and neighbors. These meetings should be as informal as possible, so that the people may be made to feel comfortable and natural. But all this should lead to the service in the church building itself. These others are but the porches to the house of God.

Mistakes to be Avoided

MISTAKES in this work are sometimes fatal. Guard against arousing bitter feelings between people of various nationalities. Born and bred in an atmosphere of hatred for some other race, on account of oppression, war or social position, the immigrant brings his prejudices with him, which often cause quarrels which are fiercely fought out. It is almost necessary to understand something about the history of a particular nationality before the largest and best work can be done among them.

Do not assume that these foreigners are worthless, insignificant people. Many of them have national histories of which any nation might well be proud.



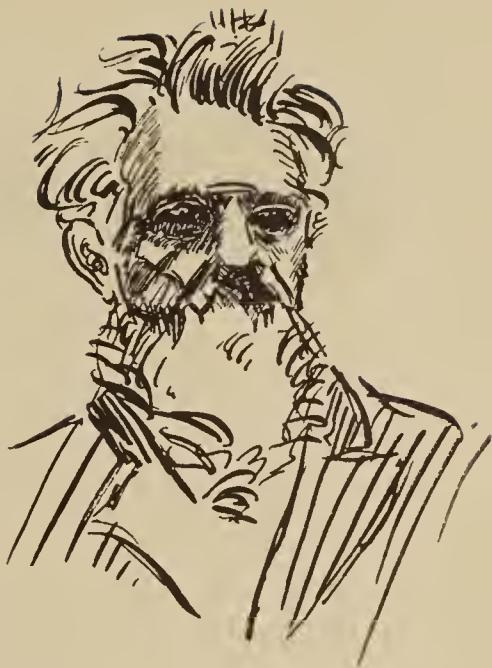
Never speak disparagingly of their country. Do not permit them to be called "Dagoes," "Hunkies" or "Sheenies." Respect their rights if they are expected to respect ours.

Do not unnecessarily antagonize their church officials, their priests and rabbis. Many of them are men of culture and are perfectly sincere in their work, rendering a real service in behalf of their people. Furthermore, it is rarely necessary to so much as mention another religion in order to preach yours. Let your message be positive and constructive, rather than controversial and negative.

Be careful not to arouse in the children a feeling of superiority over their parents. The temptation for the child to believe that its parents are back-numbers is only too strongly developed in this country. This applies particularly to the children of the foreigner as they become "Americanized." In dealing with these children show them how much America owes to the foreigners who have helped to make our country what it is, dwelling upon the greatness of their forefathers.

Avoid the spirit which would cause you to engage in this work simply for the sake of adding a few more members to your church or your denomination. Your motives should be altruistic—your desires simply to help the immigrant in every way possible. If he can be helped best by uniting with

your church, he should be given every encouragement to do so. But there may be occasions when it would be better to have him remain faithful to his own church. The church is simply a means to an end, and not an end in itself. It is well to remember in this larger work for the immigrant that Christ did not heal the sick in order to have them come to



hear Him preach. He healed them because He had compassion upon them and because they needed healing. The same principle must apply to all of our work for the immigrant.

Do not expect to finish this work by a brief excursion into the tenement-house district, nor by a mere academic discussion of the problems connected with it. The work will never be done in this fashion. It will require the consecration of the best blood and the best brain that God ever gave any man or woman. If ever we are to adequately meet the needs of the immigrant, we must engage in the work with the utmost degree of devotion and self-sacrifice. Nothing short of this is worthy of this enterprise, and nothing less will accomplish all that must be done.



The Personal Element

LIKE every other great question before the Church to-day, this whole matter resolves itself into a question of leadership. The preacher brought over from foreign lands is rendering a valuable service. We need him in this work, but too often he hasn't the vision and the grasp which is required for the task. His son and the son of the immigrant for whom he is laboring will have more of it, and if he really has enough of it will make an ideal minister for the people of his own nationality. And for this we should labor—seeking to secure the young men who are suitable for this work.

But is it too much to ask that our splendidly gifted American young people should give themselves to this task, rendering whole-hearted service for the immigrant for a week, a month, a year, a lifetime, as God may direct? Is it too much to ask that some of them should study Italian, Bohemian, German, or some other language which will permit them to converse with the foreigners whom they should seek to help? Why may we not have a

movement in behalf of the foreigners in America similar to the "Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions?" The enterprise is big enough to stir the enthusiasm of every earnest Christian man and woman. Religion, patriotism, philanthropy, education, social service—all these are needed, and the very best of them all, to answer the challenge of the immigrant to our Christianity.



